

Draft Minutes of the
San Joaquin River Management Program
Action Team Meeting
August 19, 2002

Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
Modesto, California

Introductions and Approval of Minutes

The San Joaquin River Management Program Action Team met in the main conference room of the Stanislaus Building at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center in Modesto, California. There were no comments on the final minutes of the May 13, 2002 meeting. A motion to pass the minutes was made by Alex Hildebrand and second by Karen Enstrom. Draft minutes from the most recent meeting and pertinent documents are posted on the SJRMP website at:

<http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd/sjrmp/index.html>

Ernie Taylor informed the group of the most recent Advisory Council meeting with a summary of the draft Advisory Council minutes. Fraser Gensler, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, updated the group on the Comp. Study. The public review was completed on July 22, 2002. The study will be open for review until August 23, 2002.

West Stanislaus Flood Control Project

Jacob McQuirk and Karen Enstrom, DWR, presented the West Stanislaus Flood Control Project for Orestimba Creek flood damage reduction and ecosystem restoration. The primary objectives of the Orestimba flood control project is to reduce flood damage to the City of Newman and restore the ecosystem in the watershed. Secondary objectives include groundwater recharge and recreation. The City of Newman is an agricultural based town and has been flooded 13 times in the past 47 years. The typical 100 year storm is 18,500 cubic feet per second (cfs). The channel capacity averages from 1,500 to 4,000 cfs. Pictures of the damage caused by the 1997 were included in the presentation. The creek is an ephemeral stream with a flashy hydrograph with a steep peak. Several alternatives for flood control are being analyzed. The alternatives include: bypass channel, upstream floodwater attenuation basin with 2,000 cfs outlet, upstream floodwater attenuation basin with 4,000 cfs outlet, downstream floodwater attenuation basin, chevron levee, and setback levee. The bypass channel has already been ruled cost prohibitive. The City of Newman did not want the chevron levee because it only protected the City and not the agriculture in the area in which the city economy depends.

The upstream attenuation basin would be located west of I-5 in the western alluvial woodland habitat. The woodland is not protected by law, but is protected by DFG. The basin would impact San Joaquin kit fox, California red-legged frog, and the sycamore woodland. This alternative was dropped because of the impact on the wildlife in the watershed. The downstream basin is currently being analyzed. The basin would be located just downstream of the Delta-Mendota Canal. Several farms, homes, and businesses will be affected by the basin. The environmental issues need to be assessed and a sedimentation study will need to be conducted. The setback levee alternative will also be looked at in detail. Each alternative has ecosystem restoration opportunities; including seasonal wetlands, riparian and shaded riverine aquatic cover habitat, native grasslands, exotic species eradication, water quality improvement, etc.

There have been public workshops and meetings. McQuirk asked that representatives from SJRMP also attend the public workshops and meetings. The community workshops and meetings involve potentially affected and interested public. They solicit input and develop alternatives that work for the community and the environment.

Orestimba Creek Proposal to CalFed

Parry Klassen, Coalition for Urban/Rural Environmental Stewardship, discussed the Orestimba Creek agricultural water quality pilot program. The coalition is a non-profit organization (501c3) that promotes stewardship and proper use of pesticides. The proposed pilot project will develop strategy to promote voluntary use of management practices and treatment technologies. The result being a reduction or elimination of pesticides, nutrient and other contaminant loads carried by irrigation return flows into Orestimba Creek and the San Joaquin River.

The total project funds are estimated at \$285,000 for the 5 year project, a total of \$275,000 requested from Prop 13 and \$10,000 in matching funds from local stakeholders. The project objectives include the development and design of a filtration treatment system, to identify effective and economically feasible management practices, increase awareness, build public/private partnership, and to develop a reliable database to track the use of management practices in the watershed and evaluate their potential effectiveness in reducing pollutant loads. The database will be made available to the Regional Water Quality Control Board. There is data that already exists for water quality that shows OP pesticide as the primary pollutant.

Orestimba Creek was chosen because it is a tributary of the San Joaquin River, there approximately 18,000 acres of agriculture in production, the area is intensively farmed, and most farmers already use highly engineered water delivery and drainage systems. Crows Landing was the area of focus for the pilot project. Crows Landing is a small unincorporated farming community which

was identified as economically disadvantage in the 1990 U.S. Census. The economic stability of the town is dependent on maintaining productivity of farmland.

The Coalition has also applied for a CalFed grant to implement a "Water Steward" program in Sacramento/Feather River watersheds.

The website for further information is www.curesworks.org

Stanislaus River Weir

Andrea Fuller, S.P. Cramer & Associates, discussed the Stanislaus River weir project to count salmonid and steelhead fish. The weir is proposed to be located near Riverbank on the Stanislaus River. The location was chosen for the even substrate and laminar flow required by the Alaskan weir design. This is a portable resistance weir that traps migrating fish and directs them to a central catch basin where they can be counted and released. There are currently carcass surveys conducted on the Stanislaus River. This method is controversial because of the limitations of carcass surveys and the method does not work for steelhead. Current carcass survey limitations include timing differences, abundance, survey frequency with low tag recovery rates, CWT recoveries, size distribution because smaller fish are harder to see, and age composition.

The benefits of the weir include steelhead and salmonid direct counts, a complete record of running time, flows, temperature, etc., validation of the carcass surveys, least biased sampling of fish size and age, and a count of hatchery contribution and straying. The downstream migrating fish will not be disturbed by the weir and will not be the focus of the study. There will be daily snorkel surveys for erosion because sand is the substrate in the river at the location of the weir.

Sampling is proposed to begin September 15, 2002. The first run may not be monitored 24-hours, but the plans include 24-hour monitoring in the future.

Protecting Habitat through Partnerships with Private Landowners Concept Paper

Ben Wallace, California Wilderness Coalition, presented the Protecting Habitat through Partnerships with Private Landowners concept paper. The primary focus of the paper is the 2002 Farm Bill. The objectives of the program include improve farm security by providing income to farmers and ranchers from management that enhances wildlife habitat, and increase the amount and quality of habitat for California's native plants and animals by working with private landowners to identify voluntary actions compatible with the working landscape. The result of the project is the creation of a steering committee that would combine practical work with policy issues to make habitat preservation possible

for private landowners. The paper proposes to use conservation funds from the Farm Bill to pay for habitat on private land.

Some of the opportunities in the 2002 Farm Bill include the "Partnership and Cooperation" section that allows 5% of EQIP funds to be directed toward Federal-State partnerships such as this proposed Private Lands Stewardship Program, increases in funding for conservation through EQIP, WHIP, FPP, WRP, Conservation Security Program, and the Grasslands Reserve Program, and mandate to USDA to complete a study on the delivery of conservation incentives by 2005.

Other Business

Ernie Taylor announced an upcoming public hearing concerning the adoption of regulations to establish a process for funding acquisition of property rights and related activities for the Department of Water Resources Flood Protection Corridor Program. The Flood Protection Corridor Program provides funds to acquire easements and other interests in real property from willing sellers. Projects must provide for agricultural land preservation and/or wildlife habitat protection as well as demonstrate a significant reduction of peak flood flows, flood stage, flood risk or potential flood damage. Approximately 30 million dollars will be available for the 2002 competitive solicitation process. The hearing will be held at:

September 30, 2002
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Hearing Room A, First Floor
901 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

For more information see the website listed below.

www.dfm.water.ca.gov/fpcp

Next Action Team Meeting: October 15, 2002
Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
Modesto, California
Harvest Hall, Computer Room "G"

SJRM ACTION TEAM MEETING

of
May 13, 2002

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